

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1342

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 30, 2005

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Outreach Im-
5 provement Act of 2005”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF OUTREACH.**

7 Section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is
8 amended by adding at the end the following new para-
9 graph:

1 “(34) The term ‘outreach’ means the act or process
 2 of reaching out in a systematic manner to proactively pro-
 3 vide information, services, and benefits counseling to vet-
 4 erans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
 5 erans who may be eligible to receive benefits under the
 6 laws administered by the Secretary, to ensure that such
 7 individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in apply-
 8 ing for, any benefits and programs under such laws.”.

9 **SEC. 3. AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCE-**
 10 **MENT OF OUTREACH OF ACTIVITIES DEPART-**
 11 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United
 13 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
 14 lowing new subchapter:

15 “SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH
 16 **“§ 561. Outreach activities: funding**

17 “(a) SEPARATE ACCOUNT FOR OUTREACH ACTIVI-
 18 TIES.—The Secretary shall establish a separate account
 19 for the funding of the outreach activities of the Depart-
 20 ment, and shall establish within such account a separate
 21 subaccount for the funding of the outreach activities of
 22 each element of the Department specified in subsection
 23 (c).

24 “(b) BUDGET REQUIREMENTS.—In the budget jus-
 25 tification materials submitted to Congress in support of

1 the Department budget for any fiscal year (as submitted
 2 with the budget of the President under section 1105(a)
 3 of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate state-
 4 ment of the amount requested for such fiscal year for ac-
 5 tivities as follows:

6 “(1) For outreach activities of the Department
 7 in aggregate.

8 “(2) For outreach activities of each element of
 9 the Department specified in subsection (c).

10 “(c) COVERED ELEMENTS.—The elements of the De-
 11 partment specified in this subsection are as follows:

12 “(1) The Veterans Health Administration.

13 “(2) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

14 “(3) The National Cemetery Administration.

15 **“§ 562. Outreach activities: coordination of activities**
 16 **within Department**

17 “(a) PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE COORDINA-
 18 TION.—The Secretary shall establish and maintain proce-
 19 dures for ensuring the effective coordination of the out-
 20 reach activities of the Department between and among the
 21 following:

22 “(1) The Office of the Secretary.

23 “(2) The Office of Public Affairs.

24 “(3) The Veterans Health Administration.

25 “(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

1 “(5) The National Cemetery Administration.

2 “(b) REVIEW AND MODIFICATION.—The Secretary
3 shall—

4 “(1) periodically review the procedures main-
5 tained under subsection (a) for the purpose of ensur-
6 ing that such procedures meet the requirement in
7 that subsection; and

8 “(2) make such modifications to such proce-
9 dures as the Secretary considers appropriate in light
10 of such review in order to better achieve that pur-
11 pose.

12 **“§ 563. Outreach activities: cooperative activities**
13 **with States; grants to States for improve-**
14 **ment of outreach**

15 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
16 assist States in carrying out programs that offer a high
17 probability of improving outreach and assistance to vet-
18 erans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
19 erans who may be eligible to receive veterans’ or veterans’-
20 related benefits, to ensure that such individuals are fully
21 informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans’
22 and veterans’-related benefits and programs (including
23 under State veterans’ programs).

24 “(b) LOCATION OF PROVISION OF OUTREACH.—The
25 Secretary shall ensure that outreach and assistance is pro-

1 vided under programs referred to in subsection (a) in loca-
2 tions proximate to populations of veterans and other indi-
3 viduals referred to in that subsection, as determined uti-
4 lizing criteria for determining the proximity of such popu-
5 lations to veterans health care services.

6 “(c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH STATES.—
7 The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements and
8 arrangements with veterans agencies of the States in order
9 to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance
10 outreach by the Department and the States (including
11 outreach with respect to State veterans’ programs).

12 “(d) GRANTS.—(1) The Secretary may award grants
13 to veterans agencies of States in order to achieve purposes
14 as follows:

15 “(A) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
16 erwise enhance outreach, including activities pursu-
17 ant to cooperative agreements and arrangements
18 under subsection (c).

19 “(B) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
20 erwise enhance activities to assist in the development
21 and submittal of claims for veterans’ and veterans’-
22 related benefits, including activities pursuant to co-
23 operative agreements and arrangements under sub-
24 section (c).

1 “(2) A veterans agency of a State receiving a grant
 2 under this subsection may use the grant amount for pur-
 3 poses described in paragraph (1) or award all or any por-
 4 tion of such grant amount to local governments in such
 5 State, other public entities in such State, or private non-
 6 profit organizations in such State for such purposes.

7 “(e) FUNDING.—Amounts available for the Depart-
 8 ment for outreach in the account under section 561 of this
 9 title shall be available for activities under this section, in-
 10 cluding grants under subsection (d).”.

11 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 12 at the beginning of chapter 5 of such title is amended by
 13 adding at the end the following new items

“SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH

“561. Outreach activities: funding.

“562. Outreach activities: coordination of activities within Department.

“563. Outreach activities: cooperative activities with States; grants to States for
 improvement of outreach.”.

